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By Jason Bryant

Tuesday, March 05, 2013 07:00 PM



Chilliwack, B.C – For the first time in a month, the Chilliwack City Council meeting did not revolve around the chlorination of Chilliwack's water.

That being said there was subjects presented that are very important to residents of Chilliwack.

The Literacy Outreach Coordinator of the Chilliwack Learning Community Society (CLCS), Debbie Denault was on hand to speak about the City Wide Literacy Challenge, as well as the Community Literacy Plan for Chilliwack.

The City Wide Literacy Challenge has seen varying numbers in participants every year. The first year saw about five-hundred people, the year after a little over 600 people, with last year being their banner year, with 1, 598 participants. This year there was a slight step back in numbers, with early calculations expecting an outcome of over 700 participants. This is a slight decline, but Denault is optimistic about the future of the program.

"It will be interesting to see if we continue to do this overtime," Denault says.

Denault went on to say that the CLCS is excited with the number they achieved this year and happy with the commitment from the community in Chilliwack. They also handed out awards, donated by sponsors in the community, to a few participants in the Literacy challenge. One of which was only a year old, and another who was 63 years young.

In the last year the CLCS has had some changeover on their board. Still, the CLCS has been able retain some great people dedicated to their mission and will continue to improve heading into the future.

"Really pleased to say that new people coming onto the board are amazing, skilled, passionate people," Denault says. "One of the priorities this year is board development training, which will continue to help our organization to be strong and vibrant in doing a good job in the community."



Denault made reference to the fact that funding for literacy funding has come on hard times throughout the province, which are really hurting literacy programs. Fortunately, the CLCS is in a pretty good position heading into 2013.

"Our funding is OK," Denault stated. "Literacy is one of the fields that have had drastic cuts across the province."

One of the major programs the CLCS offers is the Community Access To Literacy and Learning. The program is designed to train tutors to work with adults in the community who have less than a grade 12 education, and even those with far less education than that and need help to improve. The program also aids in the education of those who weren't born in Canada.

"That program is also one of the supports for new comers to Canada or Chilliwack," Denault says.

The numbers for the program, as well as other programs the CLCS offers, are really quickly growing, which Denault is very proud of. Denault surmised that literacy education, lifelong learning, and reaching our potential is what people in Chilliwack are thriving towards. Due to the increased numbers, the CLCS will be redoing their website this year.

Mayor Sharon Gaetz thanked all of the volunteers for their effort in helping in the literacy of Chilliwack. She recognized that it takes tremendous work and commitment to do what they've been doing.

Mayor Gaetz also said that the new library will be put to good use with all these readers, which opens up this coming May, leaning into the next aspect of the council meeting, that being the [Financial Plan for 2013](#). The plan includes a pro-rated amount Of \$640, 000 in operating expenses for the new library in Sardis, with the full operating cost of \$1,027,000 included in 2014.

Director of Finance, Kathleen Fraser gave the presentation to council, highlighting the fact Chilliwack residents are continuing to see lower financial statistics than nearby communities. For example, residential property taxes in Chilliwack are set to rise by 3.44% this year. The rise is to account for inflation, operating costs at the new Sardis library opening in May, transit services, and hiring's for the RCMP. Transit has been a hot button topic in Chilliwack for some time now and the city believes some of the budget should be used to continue its improvement.

"Currently our staff are working with our partners are working with BC Transit on extending our service on route #1, which is the Vedder corridor, from three evenings a week to seven evenings a week," Fraser says.

They are also hoping to increase service for seniors due to the lost neighbourhood program and are hoping to implement such in 2014.

Water and sewer rates will also increase by 3.44% this year, as well as increase in the tipping fee for residential and commercial yard trimmings to \$50-per-tonne. Curbside collection is also planned to be increased in 2013 to 4%.

Wherever the increases occur, they are still much lower than comparable communities.

Final adoption of the bylaws will be done after a public information meeting on March 19th.

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